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Bet You Missed It -- Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Team of News Sleuths

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Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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SIX DEGREES SKEWED!

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Reviewing **Stanley Milgram's** 1967 experiment which yielded the famous "six degrees of separation" theory, **Judith Kleinfeld** asserts that **Milgram** skewed the results by not accounting for letters that did not reach their destinations. However **Cornell** mathematician **Steven Strogatz**, while acknowledging the concerns, asserts mathematical models show such ties exist even if people aren't aware of them.

See — "Six Degrees of Uncertainty" in Random Samples section edited by **Josh Gewolb**, in *Science*, p.777, Oct. 26, 2001.

STRIP FOR PRIVACY

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

The **Privacy Rule**, crafted by the **Dept. of Health and Human Services** under the **Clinton Administration** and scheduled to go into effect in April 2003, sets out requirements that certain information be stripped from patient records before researchers can use them. Now the **Bush Administration** is reviewing portions of the rule after a deluge of concerns from health care organizations and researchers who want data such as zip codes and birth dates retained.

See — "Researchers Say Rules are Too Restrictive," by **Jocelyn Kaiser**, in *Science*, p.2070-71, Dec. 7, 2001.

NAPSTER GOES HOLLYWOOD

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

Hollywood moguls are seething. The **Napster** army has shifted to copying movies 350,000/day on the internet. And the rate is growing. And **Sony**, **Microsoft** and **TiVo** are pouring out products that can receive TV and films and swap with pals over lickety-split connections.

The file-swapping programs lack central servers that lawyers can ravage with litigation. The only real speed bump is the big lag time for downloading, but that broadband limitation won't last for long. The movie studios are bouncing between a greed-soaked hope that they can control a future pay-per-view market and the terror that piracy will spiral out of control. With movie production costs averaging \$25 million, theft could bankrupt you in an L.A. minute.

See — **Scott Woolley**, "Steal This Movie," *Forbes*, p. 66-67, Feb. 18, 02.

MONETARY MOTIVATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

The conventional wisdom that the U.S. is not producing enough scientists is not in question. According to **Stanford University** economist **Paul Romer**, science and engineering graduates are deliberately screened, weeded, and underproduced because of the expense. However, data show the numbers of students interested in science have just shifted rather than declined, and most academics acknowledge money is part of the problem but disagree that it's the only solution.

See — "Can Universities be Bribe to Train More Scientists?" by **Jeffrey Mervis**, in *Science*, p.2466-67, Dec. 21, 2001.



MEDIA VANITIES CRASH AND BURN

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

For the 1990s, spin and buzz were the key words of the "crazed cult of contemporaneity." The hyperactive **Tina Brown** was a master of appearance over substance. At *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker* and then *Talk* she served as high priestess of the temple of "fashion, hipness, irony, design and gossip."

With vast resources at her disposal she bought up the talented writers, and then often kept them idle. She squandered tens of millions, but the money always seemed to be there to keep her buzz going.

And now *Talk* has folded. Not just 9-11, but a general exhaustion with all that began to generate a "new, more substantive mood." And **Tina** didn't know how to rebrand herself. Perhaps, **Sullivan** argues, because she and her formula were "an empty center that the pyrotechnics of hype and spin and parties and public relations could only partly obscure."

See — **Andrew Sullivan**, "Some Like It Hot", *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A18, Jan. 24, 02.

SPECIAL COLLECTION SNIT

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

Gore Vidal is taking his papers from **Wisconsin** to **Harvard** to have them archived by subject rather than chronologically. Which makes sense as they contain letters by **Tennessee Williams**, **William Faulkner** and **Upton Sinclair**.

But how did he come to give Wisconsin a conditional gift? The wire services never seem to ask the right questions.

See — "Novelist Vidal Taking his papers to Harvard," *The Post and Courier*, p. 2A, Feb. 11, 02.

SPAM RELIEF

by **Bruce Strauch** (the Citadel)

A public deluged in telemarketing and email spam has had enough and isn't going to take it anymore. The **FTC** is considering a "do not call" database with fines for violating it.

Needless to say, telemarketers are in an uproar and jabbering about free speech and how good a job they do of policing themselves. But it's really a right to privacy issue. And to get on the industry no-call list, you have to do it in writing or pay \$5 online.

Policing the Internet is a stickier wicket with legions of rogue spammers vomiting pornography, fad diets and quick-buck investment schemes. But a program called TRUSTe has devised a filter that claims to have a forge-proof seal.

See — **Thomas Weber**, "Help Is on the Way For People Who Hate Spam, Telemarketing," *The Wall Street Journal*, p. B1, Feb. 11, 02.

DEVELOPED FOR DEVELOPING

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

SciDev.Net, conceived by journalists, scientists, and development agencies, was officially launched in London with the aim of providing reliable scientific news and information to scientists in developing nations in an effort to bridge the information gap.

See — "Web Site Aims to Bridge North-South Divide" by **Ben Shouse**, in *Science*, p.2073, Dec. 7, 2001.